

WHY DID HENRY IRVING CARRY A LONELY HEART

A newspaper writer referring to the late Henry Irving, famous as a theatre manager and actor, said that he "carried a lonely heart with him wherever he went." We are told that on one occasion Mr. Irving said:

"With the applause of the theatre still ringing in my ears, with the memory of the kind faces still blazoned in my memory, with the consciousness that I have won the affection of multitudes whom I can never meet in person, I have often gone home from the theatre feeling utterly desolate and alone—yearning for the intimate human companionship which fate has denied me."

The editor of the Lincoln, Nebraska, News, known among all of his acquaintances as a man of great strength and tender sympathies, refers to the statement attributed to Irving, and concerning it says: "No stronger note of pathos was ever struck." Reproducing Mr. Irving's remarks the News editor says:

In how many hearts has such an echo sounded! Men and women there are in plenty, we venture to say, who have gone through life, apparently crowned with the honors of an admiring people, with naught but an ache in their heart and a longing for one touch of a hand, one sound of a voice. We phlegmatic ones, who are content to accept what fate holds out to us and who make of our little joys the sum and substance of human happiness, have but little conception of the eternal gloom in which some souls walk. We may be thankful that the artistic temperament is not ours, we may be glad that our nerves are sound and our brains free from mold, but the pathos of the situation of those accursed as was Irving appeals to us nevertheless.

This is a mighty big world for a man upon whom great honors have been heaped to retire to his domicile "feeling utterly desolate and alone—yearning for the intimate human companionship" which, as he says, "fate has denied me."

It is absurd for a man occupying the position held by the late Henry Irving to talk about "carrying a lonely heart" with him "wherever he went." It is absurd for men of strength and intelligence to say that when they "yearn for intimate human companionship" fate denies them the boon.

There are, in this fine old world of ours, so many helpless and unfortunates men and women who yearn for "intimate human companionship" and who are unable because of their poverty-stricken condition to realize upon their ambitions that it seems the height of absurdity for a man who has—so far as financial condition is concerned—everything the heart could wish, to say that he is denied that which, as it were, is waiting at his very door.

"Intimate human companionship," indeed! All over this world today men and women, poor and helpless, so far as world's goods are concerned, yet rich in heart and intellect, are waiting, willing and anxious to give, without money and without price, the very thing which, according to the late Henry Irving, was the only thing lacking to the completion of his perfect life!

Where the editor of the Lincoln newspaper sees boundless pathos in what he calls Irving's "artistic temperament," others may see nothing but wasted opportunities. Wherever Irving went he was crowned with honors, and yet we are told that he had "an ache in his heart and a longing for one touch of a hand, one sound of a voice."

Well, there are many men and women who are poorer than Irving was, and some men and women who are richer than Irving was, who have "an ache in the heart." But not all of these have made the mistake which Irving seems to have made. He would not have "carried a lonely heart" if he had helped to bear the burdens of others and sought the great benefits always to be derived by one who, displaying tender sympathies and giving kind words, casts his bread upon the waters, not necessarily that it may return to him in many days, but rather in order that he may derive the best results from life.

There is on earth today altogether too much suffering and sorrow for any man, himself beyond the distress of physical wants, to "carry a lonely heart." There are too many tears to be dried, too many sobs to be checked, too many naked limbs to be clothed, too many empty stomachs to be filled, too many hopeless and heartsick men and women to be encouraged, for a man, stalwart in health and powerful in finances, as Henry Irving was, to "carry a lonely heart."

It is not necessary that a man be a millionaire in order to be a philanthropist.

On one occasion John Randolph, of Roanoke, spent the night at a southern home. On the following morning he mounted his horse in a group of slaves and was about to ride away when the mistress of the home presented him a subscription list for the benefit of the Armenians. Hastily returning the paper to his fair hostess, John Randolph waved his hand over the group of slaves, and said: "Madam, the Armenians are at your own doors."

At the door of every human being opportunity is knocking; it is not always the opportunity of building libraries or of founding collegiate professorships; but it is the opportunity of giving words of comfort and of cheer to men and women who are struggling under heavy loads and who in many cases need but a word to inspire them to new and holier effort.

A man whose entire life has been devoted to good deeds and yet with whom poverty and misfortune seem to have been a constant companion, recently complimented a fellow upon certain of his efforts, and added: "Such efforts will bring much more from you to others than from others to you; but that is the way of this life's gigantic panorama of the universe within our view; some seem destined to receive and some seem destined to give."

It may have been that the late Henry Irving was "destined to receive." It may have been that with all of his successes he had failed to learn how much better it is to give than to receive.

Some one has written that "nothing is more odious than that insensibility which wraps a man up in himself and his own concerns and prevents his being moved with either the joys or the sorrows of another." The man who so incurs himself has wasted his best opportunities and, as it may have been in Henry Irving's case, has "carried a lonely heart"—even unto the grave.

Men obtain the best from life when they cultivate those tender sentiments which cluster around the eternal truth: "I am my brother's keeper." Confronting every human being is the duty to grasp every opportunity not only to advance public interests but to ameliorate individual misfortune.

For years, and for years, in the nurseries of America tired children have been lulled to sleep by the sweet music of a mother's song; for years, and for years, that song has been the choicest of the nursery rhymes; it has refreshed sweet mother singers, relieved troubled fathers,

and given to the little ones for whose benefit it was sung an inspiration and a guide for their future life. Every man and woman who has grown up within the memory of that tender verse has had the inspiration to make the world happier and better; every human life whose conduct has been moulded along the lines of that simple song, has provided material contribution to the sum of human happiness. Every man and woman who has profited by the lessons of that little verse has made a reasonable success in life, even though wealth and position were denied. In every hour of our existence every one of us needs to be reminded of that song. Written in letters of gold it should be displayed in the apartments of every king, of every public official, of every busy merchant, of every man and of every woman who needs to be reminded that it is not all of life to live, nor all of death to die. Like a sweet echo from the past, as a stirring reminder of the present, as a high inspiration for the future, the simple words of this little song comes to us today: "Little drops of water, little grains of sand, make the mighty ocean and the pleasant land. Little deeds of kindness, little words of love, help to make earth happy like the heaven above."

The poet who complained of the "hermit souls that live withdrawn in the place of their self-content" provided a hint and an inspiration to the helpless, hopeless man who is tempted to "carry a lonely heart" when in his song of humanity he wrote:

I see from my house by the side of the road,
By the side of the highway of life,
The men who press with the ardor of hope,
The men who are faint with the strife.
But I turn not away from their smiles nor their tears,
Both parts of an infinite plan.
Let me live in my house by the side of the road,
And be a friend to man.

Let me live in my house by the side of the road,
Where the race of men go by;
They are good, they are bad, they are weak, they are strong,
Wise, foolish, and so am I.
Then why should I sit in the scorner's seat,
Or hurl the cynic's ban?
Let me live in my house by the side of the road,
And be a friend to man.

RICHARD L. METCALFE.

PENNSYLVANIA AND THE PRIMARY PLEDGE

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years of age, and have not been able to do any kind of labor for fifteen years. Therefore I cannot get around to see all that I would like to. I have never before seen democrats in better spirits and more determined in their fight for principle than they are at present. A certain kind of "prosperity" has been given us, and many people dare not speak out for fear of offending some of their speculating neighbors. I have taken The Commoner ever since it was started. I was the first subscriber in this town. I have, after reading The Commoner, almost always given it

to a neighbor or sent it to parties elsewhere. I have voted straight ever since my first vote in 1856. Roosevelt is vain for popularity and makes too many promises. He still sticks to such men as Paul Morton, Taft and the old-time leaders. Look at every department of the government, and you will see that from the highest to the lowest it is reeking in corruption. They call stealing "graft." See Mitchell, Burton, and on down. I will send in more pledges, and will also try to extend the circulation of The Commoner. These, I think, make 148 names that I have sent you, and among all whom I asked only five refused. They refused very mildly, saying that they did not like to bind themselves.

THE PRIMARY PLEDGE

I promise to attend all the primaries of my party to be held between now and the next Democratic National Convention, unless unavoidably prevented, and to use my influence to secure a clear, honest and straightforward declaration of the party's position on every question upon which the voters of the party desire to speak.

Signed _____

Street _____ Postoffice _____ State _____

County _____ Voting precinct or ward _____

☐ Fill out Blanks and mail to Commoner Office, Lincoln, Nebraska.